

# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **Southwest Pacific Region**

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## **USFWS Will Truck and Release Final Chinook Salmon Smolts Into San Pablo Bay Beginning Wednesday**

Sacramento – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced today it will wrap up its 2 ½-month drought contingency plan with the trucking and release of approximately 900,000 salmon smolts from the Coleman National Fish Hatchery (NFH) to the Rodeo area of San Pablo Bay.

Trucking will begin on Wednesday from Coleman NFH and is scheduled to finish with the release of about 450,000 fish each day on Wednesday, May 28 and Thursday, May 29. The USFWS began on March 24 a temporary contingency plan in conjunction with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the National Marine Fisheries Service that called for the potential trucking of fall Chinook salmon smolts in 2014 due to extreme drought conditions.

Coleman NFH typically releases all of its fall Chinook smolts onsite into Battle Creek, a tributary of the Sacramento River, allowing them to complete the

imprinting cycle during their outmigration to the ocean. A continuing severe drought in the Central Valley of California, however, has produced conditions in the Sacramento River and Delta detrimental to the survival of juvenile salmon. In response, the USFWS developed a set of triggers to be used to determine if an alternate release strategy would be necessary to avoid unacceptably high levels of juvenile fish mortality. That strategy involved trucking the smolts to sites closer to the ocean as the smolts became ready for release. Last week, some triggers were met, paving the way for this week's trucking and release operation. Those triggers include the Delta Cross Channel Gates being open within 21 days of when the salmon smolts were ready to be released, high water temperatures, and low flows. While trucking of the fish may result in better future contribution to the ocean fishery, there remains concern that at adult fish returning to the freshwater environment in the future (e.g., 2016), will not find their way back to Coleman NFH, thus resulting in broodstock shortages at the facility.

During the week of March 24, the USFWS trucked about 2.5 million salmon smolts to Rio Vista for release. On April 4, about 4.5 million salmon smolts were released onsite into Battle Creek after rain storms the previous week improved river conditions. The week of April 21, about 4 million fish were trucked from Coleman NFH to a release site near Mare Island in San Pablo Bay. The decision to truck or release fish onsite is based on continual assessment and forecasts of environmental conditions.

Coleman National Fish Hatchery was constructed in 1942 as part of the mitigation measures to help preserve significant runs of Chinook salmon threatened by the loss of natural spawning areas resulting from the construction of Shasta and Keswick dams on the upper Sacramento River. Coleman NFH contributes up to 100,000 Chinook annually to the ocean fisheries as well as thousands of fish for the fisheries in the Sacramento River.

To access ongoing information on the trucking and release operation, including a map of hatcheries and release sites, photos, the CDFW and USFWS contingency plans, and past news releases, go to:

<http://www.fws.gov/sfbaydelta/>

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/cno>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).*

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